

Amendments to the Claims:

Claims 1 – 87 (Cancelled)

88. **(Withdrawn)** A method of preparing a French fry, said method comprising using an automated device to:

receive a cooked French fry; and

inject said cooked French fry with a condiment substantially without manual assistance from a user.

89. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 88, wherein:

said method further comprises cooking said French fry; and

said step of using said automated device to inject said cooked French fry with a condiment is executed substantially immediately after cooking said French fry.

90. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 88, wherein:

said method further comprises cooking said French fry; and

said step of using said automated device to inject said cooked French fry with a condiment is executed within 5 minutes after cooking said French fry.

91. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 88, wherein said method further comprises preheating said condiment before said step of injecting said cooked French fry with said condiment.

92. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 88, wherein said method further comprises using said automated device to:

insert a dispensing portion of an elongate injection nozzle through an exterior surface of said French fry;

position said injection nozzle into an “injection position” in which said dispensing portion of said injection nozzle is within an interior portion of said French fry and in which said injection nozzle is positioned to direct condiment generally toward a lateral end of said French fry; and

after said step of positioning said injection nozzle into said “injection position” and while said nozzle is in said “injection position”, executing said step of injecting said cooked French fry with a condiment.

93. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 92, wherein said step of injecting said cooked French fry with a condiment comprises transferring condiment into an interior portion of said French fry through said injection nozzle.

94. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 88, wherein said method further comprises using said automated device to:

insert an injection nozzle through an exterior surface of said French fry;

position said injection nozzle in an “injection position” in which a portion of said nozzle and an exterior portion of said French fry form an angle of less than 75 degrees; and

while said injection nozzle is in said “injection position”, executing said step of injecting said cooked French fry with a condiment.

95. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 94, wherein said step of injecting said cooked French fry with a condiment comprises transferring condiment into an interior portion of said French fry through said injection nozzle.

96. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 88, wherein:
said cooked French fry is a first cooked French fry; and
said method further comprises using said automated device to:
receive a second cooked French fry, and
inject said second cooked French fry with a condiment.

97. **(Withdrawn)** A method of preparing a plurality of French fries, said method comprising using a French fry injection apparatus to perform the steps of:

forming a first hole in an exterior surface of a first of said plurality of French fries;

substantially immediately after forming said first hole, injecting a first portion of condiment into an interior portion of said first French fry through said first hole;

forming a second hole in an exterior surface of a second of said plurality of French fries; and

substantially immediately after forming said second hole, injecting a second portion of condiment into an interior portion of said second French fry through said second hole.

98. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 97, wherein:

said method further comprises cooking said first and second French fries;

said step of injecting said first portion of condiment into said interior portion of said first French fry is executed substantially immediately after cooking said first French fry; and

said step of injecting said second portion of condiment into said interior portion of said second French fry is executed substantially immediately after cooking said second French fry.

99. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 97, wherein:

said method further comprises cooking said first and second French fries;

said step of injecting said first portion of condiment into said interior portion of said first French fry is executed within 5 minutes after cooking said first French fry; and

said step of injecting said second portion of condiment into said interior portion of said second French fry is executed within 5 minutes after cooking said second French fry.

100. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 97, wherein said first hole is small enough to restrict condiment from flowing from said interior portion of said first French fry to an exterior of said first French fry.

101. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 97, wherein said first hole is small enough to at least substantially prevent condiment from flowing out of said interior portion of said first French fry.

102. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 97, wherein said first hole has a maximum width of 0.09 inches.

103. **(Withdrawn)** The method of Claim 97, further comprising using an injection nozzle to perform said steps of:

forming said first hole in said exterior surface of said first French fry; and

injecting said first portion of condiment into said interior portion of said first French fry.

104. **(New)** A food processing apparatus comprising:

(A) a support surface that is adapted to support at least one food item;

(B) an automated injection assembly that is configured for injecting said at least one food item with condiment while said at least one food item is being supported by said support surface, wherein said automated injection assembly:

(1) comprises at least one injection nozzle, and

(2) is adapted to move said at least one injection nozzle relative to said support surface; and

(C) a food item scanning system disposed adjacent said support surface, said food item scanning system being adapted to determine position data for said at least one food item, said position data corresponding to a position of said at least one food item, wherein:

said automated injection assembly is adapted for:

moving said at least one injection nozzle to a pre-injection position in which said at least one injection nozzle is disposed adjacent said food item, said pre-injection position being determined based, at least in part, on said position data; and

after said step of moving said at least one injection nozzle into said pre-injection position, injecting condiment into said at least one food item via said at least one injection nozzle.

105. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 104, wherein said food processing apparatus further comprises a control system for facilitating said steps of: (A) moving said at least one injection nozzle to a pre-injection position; and (B) injecting condiment into said at least one food item.

106. (New) The food processing apparatus of Claim 104, wherein:

 said food item scanning system is further adapted to determine item dimension data for said food item, said item dimension data corresponding to one or more dimensions of said food item; and

 said pre-injection position is determined based, at least in part, on said item dimension data.

107. (New) The food processing apparatus of Claim 104, wherein:

 said food processing apparatus comprises a support surface drive mechanism that is adapted to move said support surface relative to said food item scanning system and to thereby facilitate a determination of said position data by said scanning system.

108. (New) The food processing apparatus of Claim 107, wherein:

 said scanning system comprises a light curtain; and

 said support surface drive mechanism is adapted for moving said support surface so that said at least one food item passes through said light curtain to thereby facilitate a determination of said position data by said scanning system.

109. (New) The food processing apparatus of Claim 104, wherein:

 said food item scanning system is further adapted to determine item dimension data for said food item, said item dimension data corresponding to one or more dimensions of said food item;

 said pre-injection position is determined based, at least in part, on said item dimension data; and

 said food processing apparatus comprises a support surface drive mechanism that is adapted to move said support surface relative to said food item scanning system and to thereby facilitate a determination of both said position data and said item dimension data by said scanning system.

110. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 109, wherein:
said scanning system comprises a light curtain; and
said support surface drive mechanism is adapted to move said support surface so that said at least one food item passes through said light curtain to thereby facilitate the determination of both said position data and said item dimension data by said scanning system.

111. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 110, wherein:
said support surface drive mechanism is a drive mechanism associated with a conveyor; and
said support surface is a top surface of said conveyor.

112. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 110, wherein:
said support surface drive mechanism is a conveyor; and
said support surface is a food item support plate disposed adjacent a top surface of said conveyor.

113. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 104, wherein:
said at least one food item comprises a particular food item;
said injection nozzle comprises a particular injection nozzle;
said step of injecting condiment into said at least one food item via said at least one injection nozzle comprises:

moving said particular injection nozzle toward said particular food item until: (a) said particular injection nozzle pierces an exterior surface of said particular food item, and (b) an outlet portion of said particular injection nozzle is disposed within said particular food item; and

while said outlet portion is disposed within said particular food item, injecting condiment through said outlet portion and into an interior portion of said particular food item.

114. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 104, wherein:

 said at least one injection nozzle comprises a first injection nozzle and a second injection nozzle;

 said at least one food item comprises a particular food item; and

 said step of injecting condiment into said at least one food item comprises using said first injection nozzle to inject said particular food item with condiment while said second injection nozzle also injects said particular food item with condiment.

115. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 104, wherein:

 said at least one injection nozzle comprises a first injection nozzle and a second injection nozzle;

 said at least one food item comprises a first food item and a second food item; and

 said step of injecting condiment into said at least one food item via said at least one injection nozzle comprises using said first injection nozzle to inject said first food item with condiment while said second injection nozzle injects said second food item with condiment.

116. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 104, wherein:

 said at least one injection nozzle comprises a first injection nozzle, a second injection nozzle, and a third injection nozzle;

 said at least one food item comprises a first food item, a second food item, and a third food item; and

 said step of injecting condiment into said food item via said at least one injection nozzle comprises using said first injection nozzle to inject said first food item with condiment while said second injection nozzle injects said second food item with condiment, and while said third injection nozzle injects said third food item with condiment.

117. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 104, wherein:
said at least one injection nozzle comprises a particular injection nozzle;
said automated injection assembly further comprises a carriage; and
said particular injection nozzle is retractably mounted to said carriage so
that said particular injection nozzle can move toward and away from food items
disposed on said support surface.

118. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 117, wherein:
said automated injection assembly further comprises a carriage support
member that extends laterally across and above said support surface;
said carriage is slideably mounted adjacent said carriage support member
so that said carriage can slide relative to said support surface; and
said step of moving said at least one injection nozzle to a pre-injection
position comprises causing said carriage to slide along said carriage support
member until said particular injection nozzle is in said pre-injection position.

119. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 104, wherein:
said at least one injection nozzle comprises a first injection nozzle and a
second injection nozzle;
said automated injection assembly further comprises a first carriage and a
second carriage;
said first injection nozzle is retractably mounted to said first carriage so
that said particular injection nozzle can move toward and away from food items
disposed on said support surface; and
said second injection nozzle is retractably mounted to said second carriage
so that said particular injection nozzle can move toward and away from food
items disposed on said support surface.

120. (New) The food processing apparatus of Claim 119, wherein:

 said automated injection assembly further comprises a first carriage support member that extends laterally across and above said support surface;

 said automated injection assembly further comprises a second carriage support member that extends laterally across and above said support surface;

 said first carriage is slideably mounted adjacent said first carriage support member so that said first carriage can slide relative to said support surface;

 said second carriage is slideably mounted adjacent said second carriage support member so that said second carriage can slide relative to said support surface; and

 said step of moving said at least one injection nozzle to a pre-injection position comprises:

 causing said first carriage to slide along said first carriage support member until said first particular injection nozzle is in a pre-injection position; and

 causing said second carriage to slide along said second carriage support member until said second particular injection nozzle is in a pre-injection position

121. (New) The food processing apparatus of Claim 104, wherein:

 said injection nozzle is disposed above said support surface; and

 said step of moving said at least one injection nozzle to said pre-injection position comprises moving said injection nozzle laterally above said support surface until said injection nozzle is in said pre-injection position.

122. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 104, wherein:
said at least one food item comprises a particular food item;
said injection nozzle comprises a particular injection nozzle;
said step of injecting condiment into said at least one food item via said at least one injection nozzle comprises:

moving said particular injection nozzle toward said particular food item until: (a) said particular injection nozzle pierces an exterior surface of said particular food item, and (b) an outlet portion of said particular injection nozzle is disposed within said particular food item; and

while said outlet portion is disposed within said particular food item, injecting condiment through said outlet portion and into an interior portion of said particular food item.

123. **(New)** A food processing apparatus comprising:

(A) a support surface that is adapted to support at least one food item;

(B) an automated injection assembly that is configured for injecting said at least one food item with condiment while said at least one food item is being supported by said support surface, wherein said automated injection assembly:

(1) comprises at least one injection nozzle, and

(2) is adapted to move said at least one injection nozzle relative to said support surface; and

(C) a food item scanning system disposed adjacent said support surface, said food item scanning system being adapted to determine item dimension data for said at least one food item, said item dimension data corresponding to one or more dimensions of said at least one food item, wherein:

said automated injection assembly is adapted for:

moving said at least one injection nozzle to a pre-injection position in which said at least one injection nozzle is disposed adjacent said food item, said pre-injection position being determined based, at least in part, on said item dimension data; and

after said step of moving said at least one injection nozzle into said pre-injection position, injecting condiment into said at least one food item via said at least one injection nozzle.

124. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 123, wherein:

said injection nozzle is disposed above said support surface; and

said step of moving said at least one injection nozzle to said pre-injection position comprises moving said injection nozzle laterally above said support surface until said injection nozzle is in said pre-injection position.

125. **(New)** The food processing apparatus of Claim 124, wherein:
said at least one food item comprises a particular food item;
said injection nozzle comprises a particular injection nozzle;
said step of injecting condiment into said at least one food item via said at least one injection nozzle comprises:

moving said particular injection nozzle toward said particular food item until: (a) said particular injection nozzle pierces an exterior surface of said particular food item, and (b) an outlet portion of said particular injection nozzle is disposed within said particular food item; and

while said outlet portion is disposed within said particular food item, injecting condiment through said outlet portion and into an interior portion of said particular food item.